

BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

VOLUME II

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NUMBER 9

FRENCH FURNITURE

GOthic AND RENAISSANCE PERIODS

“WE call furniture the collection of movable and other objects which serve to ornament or furnish a house without directly forming a part of it.” It has been remarked that to judge of the character of a man who no longer exists, it would suffice to see an inventory of his household goods, his clothes, his jewels, his books, etc., because all these things by their solidity or their frivolity give a complete idea of the personality. Hence, it is impossible to trace even summarily the history of French furniture without establishing some connection between what constitutes that furniture and the material and moral life of the people to whom it belonged. Until a not very distant epoch furniture [*meuble*, from the Latin *mobilis*, movable] preserved its traveling aspect. This aspect, still familiar in the time of the League and of the Fronde, did not approach what it had been in the middle ages. Until about 1450 furniture followed the person of its lord and master each time that he changed his residence; it was also specially constructed in view of these rapid displacements. Every piece of furniture might be transformed into a chest (*coffre*). Hence pieces of furniture of limited and peculiar form. Hence those cup-boards which could be divided into several compartments easy to load on to a pack-horse. Hence also the strength and simplicity of the early furniture. However, taste and the love of display, characteristics of our race, were not to be suppressed. The chests were sometimes clasped with silver, enriched

with paintings, and if in plain wood were superbly covered with tapestry and rich stuffs.

The exigencies of life, war, and pillage have done away with most of the movable furniture of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For exact information as to its character, we are obliged to depend largely upon miniatures, paintings in books, and we are especially impressed with the extraordinary importance given to hangings and draperies in this period.

A revolution analogous to the Gothic movement in architecture brought about the complete transformation of furniture. The period of this revolution has never been precisely fixed. However, it may be supposed that it took place about 1350. In the same way that the architects had in their edifices substituted for the plain walls supporting the weight of the vault a series of pillars and little columns connected by arches . . . so had also these clever cabinet makers and carpenters ceased to make the different surfaces of their coffered boards, clumsily cut, laid side by side and held together by an armature of iron; from that time on they formed the general structure of these pieces of furniture of beams solidly joined by means of tenons and mortises, constituting a sort of frame, and fitted the interior of these frames with panels of slight thickness grooved into these strong structures. This combination of frames and panels, methodically placed, by its succession of different planes, took away all monotony of surface. Moreover, it permitted the sculptor to come to the aid of the cabinet maker. The furniture of this time presents striking resemblances to the edifices. Some large

pieces, such as *armoires*, form veritable monuments. The panels of sideboards and chairs are, like the walls, decorated with three and four-lobed arches, with little steeples and with pierced work. Like them they are surmounted by small balustrades, their angles filled in with tiny columns.

The Renaissance, in its first period, acted with furniture as it did with architecture. It preserved the main lines of the old forms and limited itself to filling up and adorning them with ornaments of a more modern fashion.

It was only about 1530 that furniture with a framework and panels as well as chairs began to adopt a really new order. Pieces of furniture became more complex, with columns, porticos, pediments, niches, friezes, cartouches, caryatids, etc., constituting veritable little monumental façades.

With the regency of Catherine de Medici, the Italian taste made itself felt at the French court. Ebony made its appearance, and ivory mingled its delicate white arabesques with the new wood and the passion for pretty cabinets kept pace with the spread of incrustation. It was at this

time that sculpture in connection with furniture acquired its greatest importance. Everywhere in France schools were formed which added to the general style their own good qualities or defects. Large pieces of furniture were covered with luxuriant reliefs, but small pieces, such as chairs and the like, remained simple in form and borrowed their magnificence from the rich stuffs in which they were upholstered, as tapestries, velvets, embroideries, etc., played an ever more important part.

The pillage and anguish which accompanied the religious wars checked momentarily this passion for furniture, but with the reign of Henry IV it began again with redoubled intensity. Marie de Medici, Anne of Austria, Richelieu and after him Mazarin encouraged by their examples the most sumptuous excess.

To be continued

(Translated and paraphrased from H. Havard, *Dictionnaire de l'ameublement et de la décoration depuis le XIII^e siècle* . . . v. 3, p. 820, article *Mobilier*.)

M. McL.





PEN-CASE, 13TH CENTURY

SARACENIC METAL WORK



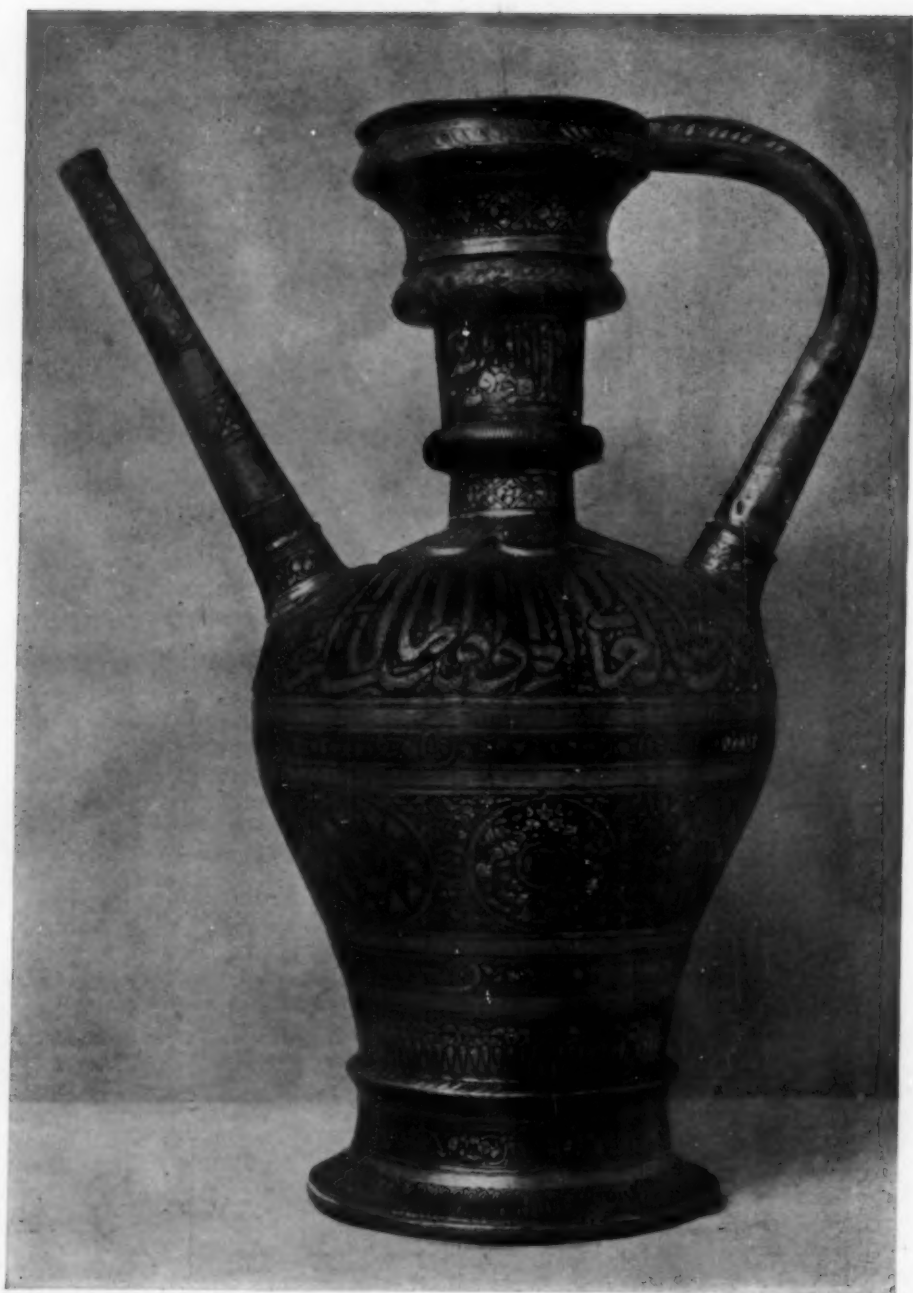
CASKET, 14TH CENTURY

AMONG the examples of Oriental metal work to be found in the Edward C. Moore Collection are a number of objects of Saracenic origin. There are existing dated specimens which show that the art of inlaying and chasing brass and copper vessels flourished in Mesopotamia in the early part of the thirteenth century, although it had in all probability been developing for centuries before that time. In fact, Mr. Gaston Migeon, in an article in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* quotes the testimony of Ibn-Said, an Arabian geographer, who in the twelfth century described the inhabitants of Mosil in Mesopotamia as "showing great ability in the different branches of art, particularly in the manufacture of copper vases."

The earliest known examples of this

Saracenic art indicate that originally decoration in relief was almost exclusively used, later, the use of incrustations of silver began to appear, at first lightly, then more and more boldly applied until every part of the design was invaded by plates of the precious metal and the use of relief was abandoned. The Mosil style of decoration of the thirteenth century is characterized by the lavish use of the figures of men and animals, and we find in the medallions encircling the vessels spirited representations of hunting scenes in which turbaned cavaliers gallop along, falcon on wrist, alternating with picture of princes seated cross-legged on their thrones attended by their vizirs. A curious detail of this ornamentation is the occasional use of the human figure to represent letters in the inscriptions which run around the vessels in narrow bands. There exists, too, quite a large number of Saracenic brasses whose characteristics connect them with the ateliers of Mosil, but which were apparently manufactured for the use of Christians, the figures portrayed being in devotional attitudes and their heads encircled by halos, similarly treated vessels both in metal and faience pottery are found in Persia and Turkestan, but in these cases the nimbus is owing to Chinese influence and is not of Christian origin.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, numbers of the metal workers of Mosil, either oppressed by Mongolian rule, or in answer to the growing demand caused by their fame, seem to have migrated to Cairo in Egypt, Damascus in Syria to Persia, and Samarkand Central



WATER JAR, 14TH CENTURY

Asia, where they carried on the traditions of their art. Their productions at first did not distinguish themselves by any new characteristics, but little by little the figures of men and animals, so profusely used by the Mosil artists, began to disappear and were replaced in the brasses of Syrian origin by decorations of birds, foliage and flowers, while at Cairo the use of inscriptions took on a capital importance, the inscription occupying generally the body of the object which it decorated, whether ewer, candlestick or water bottle, the birds and flowers being merely decorative accessories.

During the same period this art of metal working had penetrated into Persia, where it appears at Ispahan to have reached its height during the fourteenth century. These brasses reproduced all the characteristic details of the Mosil

work. The figures, however, changed greatly in type and the *baik* and *gandourab* of the Arabian costume were replaced by loose floating garments. In their later development the Persian brasses show an extreme delicacy of ornamentation although lacking the force and breadth of design of the earlier works, and the use of gold to further enrich the objects became frequent.

In the sixteenth century this art of inlaying brass with silver was brought to Europe from the Orient, and there was founded in Venice a school of metal workers calling themselves *Azzimini*, in whose hands the style gradually changed in character, the somewhat severe outlines of the true Saracenic bowls and candlesticks giving place to more graceful Western shapes.

A. M. S.



DETAIL FROM A CANDLESTICK, 14TH CENTURY

KNIVES AND FORKS



KNIVES were known long before forks; the use of a knife at table, however, not becoming prevalent until the end of the fifteenth century, while the knife and fork, in conjunction, were not found in England until the middle of the next century, the dagger and spoon being all that was requisite during the period when ewers and basins were in every day use.

In olden times, during meals, people sat on the ground or on stools and chairs, and having neither knives, forks, nor any substitute for them answering to the chopsticks of the Chinese, they ate with the fingers, as the modern Asiatics do, and universally with their right hands. Later, knives were sometimes used at table, to facilitate the parting of a large joint, the people still eating with their fingers. The Greeks and Romans were served with viands ready cut, the posture assumed on the *triclinium* (that of resting on one arm) rendering the use of a knife and fork impossible. The English were in the habit of holding their food in a napkin with their left hand, while with their right they cut it with a knife and carried it to the mouth, a habit now esteemed vulgar; but it was the back of the knife, however, which entered the mouth, the protuberance on the back of old-fashioned knives being a relic of an old custom, which lingered after the habit of eating with them had disappeared.

In very early inventories mention is made of a large number of napkins, but none of forks, with the exception of one or two with two prongs, used for eating fruit. Ewers and basins were passed around after every meal, the hands being held over the basin while water, often scented, was poured over them from the

ewer, by the server, as is still the custom among Orientals.

"The dagger* originally was utilized in the place of a knife at meals. The earliest form of knife used at table was very small, with a straight, slender blade, the handle being of elaborately carved ivory, of agate, or of silver, often inlaid with enamel or precious stones, and kept as the individual property of its owner. Such were in use throughout the sixteenth century, and were evidently regarded as a great luxury. Sets of knives were not common till the beginning of the seventeenth century; the handles of these were usually of agate. At the end of the seventeenth century what is known as the sabre blade came into use; the size of the knife gradually increasing, and the blade becoming wider and more curved, a corresponding line also being introduced into the handle. We now designate these as pistol-handled, from the shape of the handles, which were made in green stained ivory, silver and agate. The broad end of the blade was invariably used for such small food as it was inconvenient to manage with the ordinary steel two-pronged fork of the time. Another variety of handle, straight and enlarging towards the end, and cut off obliquely, was also in vogue at the same period. The sabre form of blade continued throughout the century, and then the fashion slowly reverted again to the straight blade with a rounded or pointed end. Silver blades were rarely made before 1760."

In a note by Dr. Birch in his edition of Gardner Wilkinson's *The Ancient Egyptians* (1878), he writes: The fork, *ligula*, was introduced late under the Roman Empire; it had only two prongs. Several silver ones have lately been found in Rome." Doubting this statement, the writer (in 1888) referred the question to the British Museum, receiving the following reply from Mr. Cecil Smith:

"With reference to the use of forks in Roman times, I have to offer the following observations:

*Percy Macquoid in the introduction to his *Knife, Fork, Spoon, and Silver-Table-Plate Exhibition*, London, 1902.

I. The word *ligula* or *lingula* was certainly never applied to this signification. It is undoubtedly a kind of spoon, of which the bowl is in the form of a tongue (*lingua*), and is applied invariably to distinguish this form of spoon from the more ordinary form, called *coclear*.

II. Forks were undoubtedly used in antiquity as in mediæval times, for the preparation and cutting up of food in the kitchen; but the employment of table forks seems to be of comparatively modern date.

III. There is no word in Latin which expresses the sense of a 'fork'; *furca*, *furcula* and *furcilla* never represent table utensils.

IV. The notices which have been published from time to time, recording the discovery of ancient Roman forks, bring no evidences to show that the objects in question were designed for the purpose of eating; we have in the British Museum several objects in bronze of corresponding form, which were probably used in surgical operations.

V. The fact is, the Romans ate with their hands. Ovid, in the *Ars Amandi*, III, 755, lays down the rule of politeness in this respect:

'Carpe cibos digitis-est quidam gestus edendi; Ora nec immunda tota à perunge manu.'¹

Wright, in his *History of Domestic Manners*, states: "We have instances of forks even so far back as the Pagan Anglo-Saxon period, but as they are often found coupled with spoons, I am led to the conviction that they were in no instance used for feeding, but merely for serving."

The great French authority, Henry Havard, is of opinion that "The history of the fork involves weighty arguments for and against its use at table, previous to the sixteenth century. The fork was known to antiquity, and it is named in inventories of the Middle Ages; but whether it was then used to convey food to the mouth is another question, which has caused great controversy." But it is M. Havard's conclusion that "up to

the end of the sixteenth century people served themselves exclusively with their fingers in eating, and that forks were designed for other purposes."

Prior to this date they were used by cooks at the fire for roasting meats. The use of forks for carrying food to the mouth is held to have been originally due to the extraordinary development of collars and ruffs, toward the end of the sixteenth century.

Forks were in use in Italy long before this, Venice celebrating in 1897, the 900th anniversary of their first introduction. It took three hundred and sixty years for the fork to reach Florence; in 1379 it is found in France, but it was not until 1608 that the traveler, Thomas Coryate, brought its use at table direct from Venice to England, as set forth in his *Crudities*, published in 1611.

In a curious little book on carving, in the Museum Library, *Il Trinciante di M. Vincenzo Cervio*. . . . In *Venetia*, 1593, are illustrations, full size, of knives and two-pronged forks, with one of three prongs (*Forcina per li frutti*), and a curious implement for holding eggs (*Fero per trinciar l'oua*). It describes forks wholly of metal: in France and Germany, long-handled, with short prongs; in Spain and Naples short of handle, with long prongs.

In the American colonies Governor Winthrop is known to have owned a fork, but whether he used it at the table is doubtful. In 1632 Edward Howes writes from London:² "I have sent you a short weapon, you may call it an Irish Skeyne, a knife or what you will; together with a small sawe and steele hammer, and a bodkyn and a forke all in one case; the usefull applycation of each I leave to your discretion." There are few references to the fork in the inventories of the seventeenth century, the first mention of one for the table occurring in 1670. Six four-pronged forks are found among the items of silverware belonging to the estate of Capt. Thomas Gilbert, innholder, of Boston, inventoried in 1719, but their use did not become general until 1760.

²The Winthrop Papers.

¹See also Horace, Ep. 1, 16, 23, "*Manus unctae*."

In illustration of the foregoing slight description of knives and forks, the reader is referred to the fine collection of seventeenth and eighteenth century specimens given to the Museum by Mr. Rutherford Stuyvesant, contained in the case at the east end of Gallery 23. The Avery collection in the Gold Room has some examples of combined forks and spoons, while one of the earliest three-pronged forks (c. 1686) is in the collection of English silverware, lent by Mr. George S. Palmer, in Gallery 32. J. H. B.

A RECENT PUBLICATION

AN additional catalogue in the series dealing with the "Musical Instruments of All Nations"* in the Crosby Brown Collection, and devoted to the "instruments of savage and semi-civilized peoples," has just been published. It is the second section under the latter heading, and enumerates instruments used by the peoples of Oceania: Malaysia, Melanesia and Australia, Polynesia and Micronesia; or more in detail, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, the Philippine Islands; New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides, New Caledonia, the Fiji Islands, the Bismarck Archipelago and Australia; the Sandwich Islands and New

*Catalogue of the Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments of All Nations. III. Instruments of savage tribes and semi-civilized peoples. Part 2. Oceania. New York, 1907. XXI, 128, 62 p. 14 illus. Octavo. Price, 10 cents.

Zealand. The collection does not pretend to be exhaustively complete, but the preface expresses the hope and intention of ultimately making it more so. Besides the Catalogue, occupying fifty-eight pages, there are several sections adding to the usefulness of the book. The Preface is a sort of résumé of the Catalogue, giving considerable information as to the principal types, their interrelations and their position in the general development. A plan of the galleries is given, affording a clue to their arrangement and enabling the user to orient himself readily. A Key to the contents of the galleries performs a similar service for all of the instruments of all lands, indicating the general contents of each section. A Bibliography of musical literature and a list of authorities used, indicate the care which has been exercised in compiling the masses of information which are scattered through the Catalogue in numerous foot-notes. An exhaustive index completes the volume. Mention should also be made of a large number of full-page illustrations and plates which make the book valuable to those who are not able to visit the collection itself. The series in this way promises to be of general value and a distinct addition to the literature of the subject. Like the Hand-Books which have preceded, this one does not simply enumerate the various types and individual instruments, but gives careful descriptions of their physical features and information as to their method and occasion of use. C. R. G.





KNEELING MADONNA, TERRA COTTA BY GIOVANNI DELLA ROBBIA

NOTES

TEMPORARY CHANGES IN THE GALLERIES.—While changes are being made in the sky-lights over the Fifth Avenue entrance hall, the collection of modern sculpture has been placed in various other halls and galleries, chiefly galleries 6, 7, 20 and 24. Certain changes in the skylights of gallery 6 of the second floor have necessitated the temporary withdrawal of a portion of the collection of Chinese porcelains lent by Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan and the removal of the remainder to gallery 5.

LIBRARY.—Evidence of the growing popularity of the Library is shown by the increased attendance of artists and students who avail themselves of the opportunities offered for the study of works relating to the fine and industrial arts and archaeology.

Among the recent accessions are the following:

Fifty-two Arundel Society chromolithographic reproductions of the early Italian and Flemish art.

Kondakov, N. and Swenigordskoi, A. W. *Byzantinische zellen emails. Sammlung A. W. Swenigorodskoi, geschichte u. denkmäler des Byzantinischen emails von N. Kondakov.* Fol. Frankfort a. M. 1892.

Cahier Martin. *Mélanges d'archéologie, d'histoire et de littérature. Collection de mémoires sur l'orfèvrerie et les émaux des trésors d'Aix-la-Chapelle, de Cologne, etc.* 4 vols. Fol. Paris. 1847-56.

Cahier, C. *Nouveaux mélanges d'archéologie d'histoire et de littérature sur le moyen âge.* 4 vols. Fol. Paris 1874-77.

Champeaux, A. de. *Exposition re-*

trospective d'art industriel. Bruxelles, 1888. *Orfèvrerie religieuse et civile, dinanterie et ferronnerie.* Fol. Paris, n. d.

Falke, O. and Frauberger, H. *Deutsche schmelzarbeiten des mittelalters und andere kunstwerke aus der kunst historischen ausstellung zu Düsseldorf, 1902.* Fol. Frankfurt a. M. 1904.

Destrée, J. *Tapisseries et sculptures Bruxelloises.* Fol. Bruxelles, 1906.

The additions during the past month were 124 volumes, divided as follows:

By purchase.....111 volumes
By presentation.... 13 volumes

The names of the donors are:

Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Castle Museum School of Art, Nottingham, England.

Comptroller of the City of New York.

Mr. George A. Hearn.

Layton Art Gallery, Milwaukee, Wis.

Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts.

New York State Education Department.

Mr. William Alexander Smith.

Mr. J. Herbert Walker.

The attendance for the month was 147.

ATTENDANCE.—The following table shows the increase in attendance in July of this year over the same month last year to have been 5,685.

| | 1906 | 1907 |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| 17 Free Days... | 31,248 | 18.....35,374 |
| 9 Evenings... | 2,405 | 4.....1,950 |
| 5 Sundays... | 20,583 | 4.....21,910 |
| 9 Pay Days... | 2,665 | 9.....3,352 |
| | <hr/> 56,901 | <hr/> 62,586 |

COMPLETE LIST OF ACCESSIONS

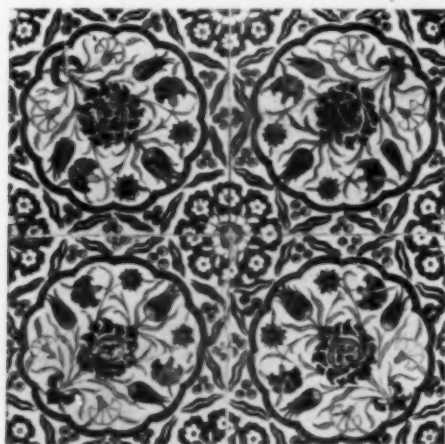
JULY 20 TO AUGUST 20, 1907

| CLASS | OBJECT | SOURCE |
|-----------------------------|--|-----------|
| CERAMICS | †Twenty-one tiles, Damascan..... | Purchase. |
| FURNITURE AND WOODWORK. . . | †A valise, covered with leather, Spanish, seventeenth century; a coffer, Spanish, sixteenth century; a carved wood stall, French, sixteenth century; a carved wood stall, French, fifteenth century. . . | Purchase. |
| SCULPTURE—ITALIAN..... | †Kneeling Madonna, by Giovanni della Robbia | Purchase. |
| TEXTILES | †A silk fabric, Italian, twelfth to thirteenth century..... | Purchase. |

LIST OF LOANS

JULY 20 TO AUGUST 20, 1907

| CLASS | OBJECT | SOURCE |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| CERAMICS..... (Floor II, Room 2.) | A collection of forty-seven pieces of stoneware, German, and Swiss, seventeenth to eighteenth century..... | Lent by Mr. Robert W. de Forest. |
| | †Recent Accessions Room (Floor I, Room 3). | |



DAMASCAN TILES

BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

THE BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

FIFTH AVENUE AND 82D STREET

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Subscription price, one dollar a year, single copies ten cents. Copies for sale may be had at the entrance to the Museum.

All communications should be addressed to the editor, Henry W. Kent, Assistant Secretary, at the Museum.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MUSEUM

The Metropolitan Museum was incorporated April 13, 1870, "for the purpose of establishing and maintaining in said city a Museum and library of arts, and the application of arts to manufactures and practical life, of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects, and, to that end, of furnishing popular instruction and recreation."

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MEMBERSHIP

| | |
|---|----------|
| BENEFACTORS, who contribute or devise | \$50,000 |
| FELLOWS IN PERPETUITY, who contribute | 5,000 |
| FELLOWS FOR LIFE, who contribute | 1,000 |
| FELLOWSHIP MEMBERS, who pay an annual contribution of | 100 |
| SUSTAINING MEMBERS, who pay an annual contribution of | 25 |
| ANNUAL MEMBERS, who pay an annual contribution of | 10 |

PRIVILEGES.—All classes of members are entitled to the following privileges:

A ticket admitting the member and his family, and his non-resident friends, on Mondays and Fridays.

Ten complimentary tickets a year for distribution, each of which admits the bearer once, on either Monday or Friday. These tickets must bear the signature of the member.

An invitation to any general reception given by the Trustees at the Museum, to which all classes of members are invited.

A ticket, upon request, to any lecture given by the Trustees at the Museum.

The Bulletin and a copy of the Annual Report.

A set, upon request at the Museum, of all handbooks published by the Museum for general distribution.

In addition to the privileges to which all classes of members are entitled, Sustaining and Fellowship mem-

bers have, upon request, double the number of tickets to the Museum and to the lectures accorded to Annual Members; their families are included in the invitation to any general reception, and whenever their subscription in the aggregate amounts to \$1,000 they shall be entitled to be elected Fellows for Life, and to become members of the Corporation. For further information see special leaflet.

ADMISSION

HOURS OF OPENING.—The Museum is open daily, from 10 A. M. (Sunday from 1 P. M.) to 6 P. M. and on Saturday until 10 P. M.

PAY DAYS.—On Mondays and Fridays from 10 A. M. to 6 P. M. an admission fee of 25 cents is charged to all except members and copyists.

CHILDREN.—Children under seven years of age are not admitted unless accompanied by an older person.

PRIVILEGES.—Members are admitted on pay days on presentation of their membership tickets. Persons holding members' complimentary tickets are entitled to one free admittance on a pay day.

Teachers of the public schools, endorsed by their Principals, receive from the Secretary, on application, tickets admitting them, with six pupils apiece, on pay days. Teachers in Art and other schools receive similar tickets on application to the Assistant Secretary.

COPYING.—Requests for permits to copy and to photograph in the Museum should be addressed to the Assistant Secretary. No permits are necessary for sketching and for the use of hand cameras. Permits are issued for all days except Saturday, Sunday and legal holidays. For further information see special leaflet.

THE COLLECTIONS OF THE MUSEUM

The Index to the Collections will be found useful for those desiring to locate a special class or collection of objects. It can be purchased at the door.

THE LIBRARY

The Library, entered from Gallery 15, containing upward of 12,000 volumes, chiefly on Art and Archaeology, is open daily, except Sundays, and is accessible to students and others.

PHOTOGRAPHS.—A collection of photographs of musical instruments, ancient and modern sculpture, architecture, painting and the industrial arts will be found here. The Edward D. Adams collection of photographs of architecture and sculpture of the Renaissance will be found in Room 32.

CATALOGUES

The catalogues of the Museum collections, now in print, number seventeen. These are for sale at the entrances to the Museum, and at the head of the main staircase. They are supplied to members free, on personal application at the Museum.

PHOTOGRAPHS ON SALE

Photographic copies of all objects belonging to the Museum, made by the Museum photographer, are on sale at the Fifth Avenue entrance. Orders by mail, including application for photographs of objects not kept in stock, may be addressed to the Assistant Secretary.

Photographs by Pach Bros., the Detroit Publishing Co., and Braun, Clément & Co., of Paris are also on sale.

| Sizes | Carbonettes | Silver |
|----------------|-------------|--------|
| 8 x 10 inches | \$.40 | \$.20 |
| 10 x 12 inches | .75 | .40 |
| 11 x 14 inches | .90 | .50 |
| 18 x 22 inches | 3.00 | |

RESTAURANT

A restaurant is located in the basement on the North side of the main building. Meals are served à la carte, 10 A. M. to 5 P. M. and table d'hôte, from 12 M. to 4 P. M.